

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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CIEP-01 TRSE-00 SS-15 STR-04 OMB-01 CEA-01 CIAE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 0651

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, AR

SUBJECT: LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COMMISSION (CAL)

REF: USDAO BUENOS AIRES IR 6 804 0561 76

1. ROLE OF LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COMMISSION (CAL) ESTABLISHED AFTER MILITARY COUP OF MARCH 1976 IN LIEU OF DISSOLVED CONGRESS HAS BEEN SUBJECT OF SPECULATION, VIS-A-VIS BOTH THE JUNTA AND THE NEW MINISTRY OF PLANNING. ON BASIS OF LIMITED AVAILABLE EVIDENCE, IT APPEARS CAL MAY BE LOSING IMPORTANCE AS FORUM FOR AIRING OF ARMED SERVICES VIEWS ON GOA "LEGISLATION."

2. ACCORDING TO CIVILIAN SOURCE WITH LONG EXPERIENCE IN SENATE STAFF WHO HAS BEEN WORKING IN CAL SINCE COUP (AS HAVE MANY OTHERS OF PROFESSIONAL STAFF OF OLD CONGRESS), CAL IS BEING DOWNGRADED. WITH DEPARTURE OF ADMIRAL VANEK TO NEW DUTIES IN END OF YEAR PROMOTION AND ASSIGNMENT SHIFTS, CAL IS HEADED BY AIR FORCE BRIGADIER PABLO APELLA, WHO HAS BEEN SENIOR AF REPRESENTATIVE ON CAL. SOURCE CHARACTERIZES APELLA AS UNDOUBTEDLY FINE AIR OFFICER BUT LACKING QUALITIES FOR NEW POST, IN CONTRAST TO VANEK. BOTH NAVY AND AIR FORCE HAVE ROTATED NEW OFFICERS INTO CAL, WHILE ARMY HAS TENDED TO KEEP IT CONTINGENT STABLE AND MORE FULLY STAFFED, THUS
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GAINING EXPERIENCE AND GREATER INFLUENCE OVER PROCESSES OF CAL'S INTERNAL DELIBERATIONS. OFFICERS IN CAL SEEK AND REFLECT VIEWS AND POLICIES OF OWN SERVICES, AND THREE SERVICES HAVE EQUAL VOTE, BUT SOURCE MAINTAINS THAT ARMY IS "MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS."

3. THROUGH COMBINATION OF DESIRE FOR ECONOMY AND REDUCED WORK

LOAD, MILITARY HAVE BEGUN PROCESS OF RETIRING OR FIRING ABOUT 40 OUT OF 50 PROFESSIONAL STAFF INHERITED FROM CONGRESS. THESE ARE NOT BEING REPLACED BY MILITARY PERSONNEL OR OTHERS, AND MILITARY OFFICERS ASSIGNED TO CAL ARE FINDING INCREASING DIFFICULTY IN MASTERING COMPLEXITIES OF TASK IN ABSENCE OF EXPERIENCED PROFESSIONAL HELP. SOME OF PERSONNEL BEING DISCHARGED HAVE BEEN ASKED TO STAY ON IN TEMPORARY STATUS FOR ONE OR TWO WEEKS TO HELP THEIR MILITARY SUPERVISORS ADJUST.

4. NEW MINISTRY OF PLANNING UNDER GENERAL DIAZ BESSONE IS TAKING OVER INCREASING AMOUNTS OF WORK WHICH HAD BEEN ASSIGNED TO CAL, AS FORMER'S STAFF EXPANDS AND IT LEARNS THE BUREAUCRATIC ROPES, ACCORDING TO SOURCE. HE BELIEVES ARMY OFFICERS IN CAL HAVE "UNDERSTANDING" WITH PLANNING MINISTRY THAT WILL SHIFT MORE OF CAL'S DUTIES TO PLANNING, WHERE ARMY HAS CONTROL. FATAL FLAW IN CHARTER OF CAL IS LACK OF RIGHT TO INITIATE LEGISLATION; IT CAN ONLY COMMENT UPON WHAT IS REFERRED TO IT. PLANNING ON OTHER HAND CAN AND WILL LAUNCH OWN PROJECTS. SOURCE PREDICTS THAT PLANNING WILL EVENTUALLY ABSORB THE CAL, AND STATES THAT AT LEAST SOME OF OFFICERS IN CAL HAVE OPENLY TALKED ABOUT SUCH A DEVELOPMENT.

5. EVENTUAL CLASH BETWEEN DIAZ BESSONE'S PLANNING MINISTRY AND MINISTER OF ECONOMY MARTINEZ DE HOZ HAS BEEN CONSIDERED VERY POSSIBLE SINCE PLANNING JOB WAS CREATED. CAL SOURCE MAINTAINS THAT TENSIONS ARE ALREADY BUILDING, AND THAT THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT IN CAL CIRCLES THAT DIAZ BESSONE FULLY INTENDS TO MOVE INTO ECONOMIC SPHERE, ALTHOUGH IN RECENT CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR DIAZ BESSONE FIRMLY DENIED ANY INTENTION TO ENCROACH UPON CONFIDENTIAL

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ECONOMIC AREA.

6. COMMENT: SOURCE IS REASONABLY RELIABLE ONE WHOM EMBOFFS HAVE KNOWN FOR SEVERAL YEARS. HIS ASSERTIONS REFLECT VIEWS AND COMMENTS FROM SOME OTHER SOURCES AND FROM SOME PRESS COMMENTARY AND SPECULATION. OTHER SOURCES, HOWEVER, PRIMARILY MILITARY, PRESENT A MORE OPTIMISTIC VIEW OF THE FUTURE OF CAL AND CONTRADICT THE CLAIM THAT ARMY DOMINATES IT. WE DO KNOW THAT THERE IS CONSIDERABLE UNHAPPINESS IN ARMY OVER REQUIREMENT TO SHARE EQUAL AUTHORITY WITH TWO MUCH SMALLER SERVICES IN NEW GOVERNMENT. REGARDLESS OF TRUTH ABOUT INTER-SERVICE STRAINS IN CAL, NEAR-ELIMINATION OF EXPERIENCED PROFESSIONAL STAFF CAN ONLY WEAKEN CAL. ON BALANCE, WE TEND TO VIEW THAT CAL IS LESS LIKELY NOW TO BECOME KEY INSTITUTION IN GOA AS ORIGINALLY ENVISIONED, THAT PLANNING MINISTRY IS EMERGING AS ALTERNATIVE, AND THAT DEVELOPING ARMY DOMINANCE IN CAL IS REFLECTION OF FACT THAT ARMY IS THE SENIOR PARTNER IN THE MILITARY GOA.
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